



Montana Public Service Commission

Public Service Commission warns about ratepayer phone scam

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Helena, MT- The Montana Public Service Commission is warning ratepayers about a phone scam targeting Montanans by alleging they have a faulty or dangerous meter and threatening to shut off power unless the resident makes an immediate payment. This is a scam by thieves attempting to steal Montanan's money. The scammer claims to be a PSC employee and asks for payment through an electronic payment method such as Zelle or Venmo.

The scammer may also seek credit card or debit card information over the phone. Anyone receiving a suspicious or aggressive call should hang up. Never give out personal information, including account or credit card numbers, to someone who call unsolicited.

"Scammer use technology to spoof phone numbers and steal victims' money with imposter websites, which appears to be happening with this scam," said Montana PSC spokesman Dan Stusek. "The scammer is targeting customers of companies regulated by the Montana PSC, as well as members of energy cooperatives in the state. The Montana PSC does not take payments from the ratepayers of the companies it regulates and the Montana PSC does not regulate cooperatives."

Energy companies and cooperatives never threaten customers, demand specific payment types such as third-party mobile applications, surprise customers with a disconnection, or call asking for personal information.

"If NorthWestern Energy needs to upgrade or replace a meter, the cost of the new meter is not charged to the individual customer," said NorthWestern Energy spokesperson Jo Dee Black. "If we need to upgrade or replace a piece of equipment, NorthWestern will contact you ahead of time." For more information on avoiding scams go to www.northwesternenergy.com/scamalert [northwesternenergy.com].

Promptly call the Public Service Commission at (800) 646-6150 or (406) 444-6199 to report suspicious phone calls or requests for personal information. Please also consider calling the Office of Consumer Protection at (406) 444-4500 or (800) 481-6896.

The Commission regulates private investor-owned natural gas, electric, telephone, water, and sewer companies, certain motor carriers, and oversees natural gas pipeline safety and intrastate railroad safety. The Commission works to ensure that Montanans receive safe and reliable service from regulated public utilities while paying reasonable rates. For more information, visit psc.mt.gov or contact the Commission at 1-800-646-6150. Follow the Commission at [Twitter.com/@MT_PSC](https://twitter.com/MT_PSC) or visit [Facebook.com/MontanaPSC](https://facebook.com/MontanaPSC).

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